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Festivals of the different saints and virgins are celebrated at the dates fixed by the Catholic calendar. Most important are the celebrations of events regarding the life of Jesus: Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, and Corpus Christi are the occasions for the main cult activities. Only the patron of each town and the cult of the Virgin attain similar importance. In all fiestas, mass is said as Catholic ritual prescribes, and other traits of ritual demanded by the Church are also performed.

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The most important folk additions to the Catholic liturgy are dramatizations and dances somehow related to the festival which is being celebrated. The Passion of Christ is the best example. Certain of the villagers dress as Jews, apostles and other characters of the story, and participate in its representation, which takes place in church under the direction of the priest. Some also police the village so that everybody will keep the precept of not working. In some villages a full stage production is performed. The celebration of Holy Week is most renowned in Tzintzuntzan.³

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In Holy Week there are no dances. In other fiestas, music and dancing are the most important aspect of the performance accompanying church rituals, and outweigh the spoken play (Spanish, *relato* or *coloquio*).

In Corpus Christi and its Octave, the farmers take their oxen to the churchyard and pretend to plow while the other crafts represented in the village also display their work and make little samples which they later throw to the crowd. A mock market and a greased pole also make this festival an attractive entertainment. Dances of the Conquest and of the Negroes, and a May-pole dance (Spanish *tejedores*, weavers) have been reported for this occasion but seem to be obsolete now.⁴

The most important dances are performed during the Christmas-Epiphany season and on the patron saint's day. The dance performed in most towns on the day of the patron saint is that known as *moros y soldados* (Moors and soldiers) or by slightly different words. It represents the Moors' defeat by the soldiers and their conversion.⁵ In some places this dance is also performed on the Day of the Cross (May 3rd).⁶

3. Foster, 1946, 210-214.

4. León, 1906, 462-4; Beals, 1946, 125-27; Foster, 1946, 216-18.

5. León, 1906, 431 ff; Beals, 1946, 131, 144, 156.

6. For Angahuan, see Beals, 1946, 143; for eighteenth century Tangamandapio and Jacona, see Estado, 1944, 470, 477; León, 1906, 431.

796 The plays and dances performed during
 536 Christmas and Epiphany represent people
 535 who comment on the birth of the Holy
 Child and come to worship him and to
 bring him presents. The usual name for
 these dances is *pastorela* (pastoral) and
 the main characters are shepherds. Some-
 times other characters are added, often
 wearing masks, such as old men, savages
 (*apaches*), Negroes, ranchers, the Three
 Kings, hermits, angels, and devils. In some
 places the *pastorela* includes a number of
 these characters, while in others some of
 them perform in the *pastorela* and the
 others form special dances.

In Cherán, for instance, there is a dance
 of Negroes, performed on December 25th,
 another called *melebris* which includes
 Negroes, old men and savages (December
 14-24), a *pastorela* of shepherdesses (De-
 cember 24-6), and a dance of old men in-
 cluding the Three Kings (January 6).⁷
 The only complete *pastorela* which has
 been published (unfortunately only in
 Tarascan) comes from Pichátaro, 1883.⁸ It
 had shepherds, a ranch boy and girl, her-
 mit, angels, and three devils (Luzbel, Sin,
 and Cunning). The first part, performed
 by the devils, is followed by the presenta-
 tion of gifts brought by the other charac-
 ters to the Holy Child. The *pastorela* from
 Capacuaro looks similar for it has first a
 stage play by devils, followed by a dance
 with a play by ranchers, shepherds, angels,
 Europeans, and hermits who act as buf-
 foons.⁹ In another published text (from
 Quinceo, 1912), the characters are old men
 who not only bring presents to the Holy
 Child but also discuss other aspects of the
 Faith.¹⁰ Other villages have slightly dif-
 ferent Christmas dances or *pastorelas*, all
 with different combinations of the same
 basic characters.¹¹

796 A dance can become an element of cere-
 535 mony in itself. Taking a dance group to a
 saint can be an individual vow. In famous
 fiestas which draw pilgrims from many
 villages, dancers come to perform for that
 saint although the festival celebrated may
 have nothing to do with the original mean-
 ing of the dance. For instance, *Santiagos*
 (Saint James dance) from Pátzcuaro, *Pas-
 torela* from Zipiajo and the Old Men's
 dance from Cucuchucho (both Christmas
 dances) come to Tzintzuntzan to dance for
 the *Señor del Resgate* (an Ecce Homo).¹²

7. Beals, 1946, 144-154.

8. León, 1906, 433-52.

9. Beals, 194, 154-5.

10. León and Contreras, 1944.

11. Beals, 1946, 144, 155, 218; León, 1906, 435; Foster, 1948, 204.

12. Foster, 1948, 208.